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Far-right political discourse in Germany and Portugal: A corpus-driven contrastive analysis of nominal semantics

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ABSTRACT: This paper describes and relates how far-right parties construct political discourse through nominal argument structures in their electoral programs. We analyze the 2025 electoral programs of Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) and Chega using a corpus-driven approach that combines valency grammar with critical discourse analysis. Our investigation focuses on how nominal semantics encode and legitimize ideological positions in German and Portuguese contexts. The methodology integrates syntactic pattern extraction with distributional semantic modelling to examine how abstract nouns function as legitimation mechanisms. Our analysis reveals that both parties systematically use nominal constructions to present exclusionary policies as natural and inevitable while concealing the political agency behind these decisions. Word embedding analysis demonstrates consistent cross-linguistic patterns in how key concepts such as 'security', 'protection' and 'measures' are ideologically encoded. The findings show that noun valency patterns serve as specific linguistic mechanisms through which far-right discourse achieves legitimation and naturalization effects, contributing to broader polarization dynamics.



Discurso político de extrema-direita na Alemanha e em Portugal: uma análise contrastiva baseada em corpus da semântica nominal

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RESUMO: Este artigo descreve e relaciona a forma como os partidos de extrema-direita constroem o discurso político através de estruturas argumentais nominais nos seus programas eleitorais. Analisamos os programas eleitorais de 2025 da Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) e do Chega, utilizando uma abordagem baseada em corpus que combina a gramática de valências com a análise crítica do discurso. A nossa investigação foca-se no modo como a semântica nominal codifica e legitima posições ideológicas nos contextos alemão e português. A metodologia integra a extração de padrões sintáticos com a modelação semântica distribucional para examinar como os substantivos abstratos funcionam como mecanismos de legitimação. A nossa análise revela que ambos os partidos utilizam sistematicamente construções nominais para apresentar políticas de exclusão como algo natural e inevitável, ocultando, simultaneamente, a agência política por detrás dessas decisões. A análise de *word embeddings* demonstra padrões translinguísticos consistentes na forma como conceitos-chave como 'segurança', 'proteção' e 'medidas' se apresentam como ideologicamente codificados. Os resultados mostram que os padrões de valência nominal servem como mecanismos linguísticos específicos através dos quais o discurso de extrema-direita alcança efeitos de legitimação e naturalização, contribuindo para dinâmicas de polarização mais amplas.

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Introduction

The clear rise of far-right parties in the most recent elections in Portugal (May 2025) and Germany (February 2025)[1] highlights the growing influence of these political factions across Europe (Lazaridis et al., 2016; Stewart, 2020; Wodak, 2015). This paper seeks to describe and relate how the political parties Chega and Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) construct their public discourse in electoral programs, based on the premise that language serves as a powerful medium for conveying political ideas (Erdocia, 2025; Bourdieu, 1977). As Girnth (2015) emphasizes, electoral programs constitute a specific text type aimed at voters and are considered the primary texts that play a direct role in constructing public discourse.

Despite the centrality of language in political discourse (Girnth, 2015), its structure is often not examined from the perspective of grammatical operations and semantic combinatorics[2]. This paper contributes to filling this gap by focusing on the role of nominal semantics in far-right political discourse construction. It may be argued that nouns, as core carriers of lexical meaning, play a key role in shaping the ideological orientation and communicative intent of political texts. In particular, political discourse tends to exhibit a highly nominal style. Danler (2007) advocates that nominal style is especially productive in contexts where the authorship is intentionally backgrounded or rendered anonymous, enabling an impersonal and ostensibly objective mode of communication (cf. Vilela, 1999, p. 318).

While previous studies have analyzed such discourse using corpus-driven and collocational approaches (Bubenhofer et al., 2019; Meier-Vieracker, 2024), this study proposes to advance this line of research by moving beyond statistical collocational patterns (cf. Evert, 2009). Specifically, we aim to explore the structural frames of nouns and their syntactic dependencies to investigate whether pragmatic intentions are encoded at the syntactic-semantic level (cf. Bubenhofer, 2009).

1. In Germany, the AfD emerged as the party with the most significant gains in the most recent elections (see Deutsche Welle). Similarly, in Portugal, the Chega party secured a historic result, becoming the second most voted party with a record of 22% of the vote (see The Guardian).

2. Some studies approach metaphor analysis from a cognitive-linguistic perspective (e.g., Porto Requejo, 2022), while others (e.g., Bubenhofer et al., 2019; Meier-Vieracker, 2024) adopt methods grounded in distributional semantics. However, these works do not specifically address the realization of nominal argument structures within the framework of valency grammar.

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Bubenhofer et al. (2019) and Meier-Vieracker (2024) suggest that far-right discourse is structured around linguistic patterns that not only reflect ideological stances, but also fulfill specific pragmatic functions. Bubenhofer et al. (2019) show how recurring discourse-semantic figures are encoded in patterns of usage that support exclusionary narratives and reinforce ideological framings. Meier-Vieracker (2024), using word embeddings, demonstrates how racist meanings are semantically encoded in far-right discourse, often through implicit associations rather than overtly discriminatory vocabulary. These studies underscore the importance of examining both lexical co-occurrences and syntactic structures to uncover how political discourse legitimizes social exclusion and manipulates perceived objectivity through language.

Given that this paper adopts a corpus-driven approach, no predefined hypotheses about the data are assumed. However, it is grounded in the broader assumption that a contrastive analysis between two languages (here, German and Portuguese) can yield insights into how far-right discourse is structured at the semantic level. Central to this perspective is the idea that nouns function as elementary building blocks in discourse organization, particularly in political texts where nominal style prevails (Hennig, 2020). Through the comparative exploration of syntactic-semantic patterns associated with noun usage, this study aims to uncover language-specific as well as discourse mechanisms employed by far-right parties to encode ideological positions (cf. Bubenhofer, 2009).

This study is divided into four sections, followed by some concluding remarks. Section 1 presents the theoretical foundations of noun valency, outlining its relevance for syntactic-semantic analysis beyond the verbal domain, with a focus on political discourse. Section 2 describes the methodological framework, including the corpus design, annotation process, and analytical tools employed. Section 3 reports the results of the semantic and distributional analysis, showing how noun-based structures encode ideological content in far-right political texts. Section 4 provides a

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discussion of the discursive strategies revealed by these structures. Finally, the concluding remarks offer some reflections on the broader implications of noun valency for discourse analysis.

1. Noun valency and political discourse: general considerations

1.1. Introductory remarks

The original scope of valency theory has been broadened beyond the verbal domain. Nominal and adjectival valency have gained increased attention in both descriptive and theoretical linguistics (Engel, 2004; Hanks, 2013; Domínguez Vázquez, 2011; Mel'čuk, 2015). In this broader perspective, valency is reconceptualized as a general relational property that allows certain lexical units—including nouns—to govern syntactic and semantic dependents. This view is supported by major reference grammars and lexicographic works (Wöllstein & Dudenredaktion, 2022; Engel, 2004; Vilela, 1999), which document systematic regularities in how nouns select arguments and constrain their formal realization.

While the valency of many nouns—especially deverbal nouns—can be traced back to the arguments of their corresponding verbs (e.g., *Errichtung* or *construção* 'construction'), derivational morphology alone does not account for all attested syntactic configurations. Consider, for example, the noun phrases *die Errichtung des Gebäudes durch die Arbeiter* or *a construção do prédio pelos trabalhadores* 'the construction of the building by the workers'. These preserve the agent and patient roles of the underlying verbs (*errichten* and *construir*, respectively, 'construct'), but realize them through genitive constructions or prepositional phrases, diverging syntactically from the canonical verbal clauses (*die Arbeiter errichten das Gebäude* or *os trabalhadores constroem o prédio* 'the workers construct the building'). As Sántáné-Túri (2020) argues, the noun valency system exhibits struc-

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tural parallels with its verbal and adjectival counterparts, but also significant differences that justify its treatment as an independent domain.

Beyond deverbal classes, many nominal constructions exhibit valency behavior that lacks direct verbal paraphrases. Examples like *die Straße nach Santiago* or *a estrada a Santiago* 'the road to Santiago' illustrate how certain relational nouns open valency slots independent of any verbal origin. As emphasized by Vilela (1999) and Wöllstein and Dudenredaktion (2022), relational nouns inherently encode binary structures and should be regarded as genuine valency carriers. Teubert (2003) and Hölzner (2007) further develop the idea of a *sui generis* noun valency system, where nouns govern arguments according to specific combinatorial rules[3].

3. Notable examples include *Stoffergänzungen* (e.g. *ein Glas Wein* 'a glass of wine', cf. Teubert 2003) and lexical compounds (e.g., *Lebenslust* 'lust for life', cf. Hölzner 2007).

Valency must thus be viewed as a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing syntactic, semantic, logical and pragmatic dimensions (Domínguez Vázquez, 2011). The pragmatic layer affects how valency relations surface in discourse. As Vilela (1999, p. 298) notes, the interaction between semantic-ontological configurations and discourse intentions gives rise to pragmatic valency, where the activation and realization of arguments are modulated by register or communicative goals (cf. Danler, 2007). Therefore, some argument positions are only realized in contexts where they are pragmatically motivated. A comprehensive account of noun valency must therefore consider discourse-pragmatic factors (cf. Danler, 2007).

In addition to discourse-pragmatic aspects, this paper emphasizes the semantic-ontological level, focusing on sortal specifications as discussed by Pustejovsky and Batiukova (2019, p. 229). For the ontological-semantic classification of nominal predicates, we adopt the bottom-up Portlex lexical ontology (Domínguez Vázquez et al., 2021), which offers a structured typology of semantic classes derived from empirical observation of argument structures. The semantic classification of nouns in the present analysis will thus be grounded in corpus-based data and mapped according to the hier-

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archical levels of the aforementioned lexical ontology. Our aim is to explore how certain semantic types of nouns—presumably those that denote abstract, institutional or situational entities—function as organizing axes in argumentative and ideological constructions.

1.2. On the classification of nouns as valency carriers

Hölzner (2007) provides a typology of nouns grounded in their inherent semantics and valency behavior. Hölzner distinguishes between event nouns (e.g., *Abschaffung* 'abolition', *Angst* 'fear'), role-denoting nouns (e.g., *Absperrung* 'barrier', *Teilnehmer* 'participant'), and relation-denoting nouns (e.g., *König* 'king', *Tiefpunkt* 'low point'):

- Event nouns denote processes, states or occurrences that often originate from verbs (particularly in the case of deverbal nominalizations). These nouns typically preserve the argument structure of their base verbs, albeit with syntactic transformations—e.g., prepositional or genitive constructions instead of verbal complements: *die Abschaffung des Gesetzes durch das Parlament* 'the abolition of the law by the parliament'. Their valency frames usually involve agents, patients or experiencers, and the arguments may be either realized intraphrastically[4] or omitted depending on the discourse context.
- Role-denoting nouns designate entities that fulfill specific functions or participate in events or institutional contexts. Although not necessarily derived from verbs, they often entail a relational structure that includes a governed element (e.g., *Teilnehmer an einer Konferenz* 'participant in a conference'). These nouns may project a more restricted argument structure than event nouns, but they still activate semantic roles that need to be syntactically realized or contextually recoverable.

4. Hölzner (2007) distinguishes between intraphrastic realizations, where noun arguments are expressed within the same noun phrase (e.g., as genitive or prepositional attributes), and transphrastic realizations, where arguments appear outside the noun phrase, often in the broader discourse context or across sentence boundaries. This distinction is crucial for understanding the syntactic flexibility and discourse-dependency of noun valency structures.

- Relation-denoting nouns inherently encode a relation between at least two entities. Unlike event nouns, their relational structure is not dynamic but static or categorial, often expressing possession, kinship, spatial-temporal orientation or hierarchical dependency (e.g., *der König von Spanien* 'the king of Spain', *der Tiefpunkt der Entwicklung* 'the low point of the development'). These nouns require the specification of the relational term to fully instantiate their meaning, and thus possess argument positions that are syntactically or inferentially activated.

While these categories differ in terms of the number and type of arguments they can license, as well as in the syntactic patterns they give rise to, they are all considered to be valent nouns. Pustejovsky and Batiukova (2019, pp. 227-228) similarly argue that most nouns function as predicates, excluding primarily proper nouns and certain referring expressions that denote specific individuals (e.g., *my professor*). Both approaches (Hölzner, 2007; Pustejovsky & Batiukova, 2019) underscore the systematic nature of noun valency, particularly in terms of what Domínguez Vázquez (2022) calls active valency: the set of argument slots projected by a noun's inherent predicate structure. However, nominal constructions may also exhibit passive valency, which involves syntactic realizations that do not stem directly from the noun's predicate potential but are instead licensed by higher syntactic structures—such as support verb constructions (Iriarte Sanromán, 2001). These perspectives on the internal semantics of nouns and their argument-governing capacity reinforce the view that nouns encode argument structures and can attain a high degree of syntactic-semantic complexity. Moreover, the compactness inherent in nominal style facilitates efficient argument realization through various syntactic mechanisms (Hennig, 2020)—a phenomenon that forms the theoretical foundation of the present study and receives detailed examination in the following section.

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1.3. On noun valency and political discourse

Nominal argument structures play a pivotal role in political discourse, as they offer a means of representing events, actions and agents in a condensed and often more abstract form. As Vilela (1999, p. 306) notes, nouns serve to denote "objects and objectality". This linguistic strategy is particularly prominent in specialized and administrative registers, where it serves both pragmatic and cognitive condensation functions. From a critical discourse analysis perspective, these linguistic choices are not merely stylistic preferences but constitute strategic mechanisms for ideological legitimation and power maintenance (Fairclough, 2003; Hodge & Kress, 1993; Wodak, 2015; Reyes, 2011).

One of the most significant discursive effects is the backgrounding of agency and responsibility. By embedding argument structures within nouns, political actors can obscure agent identity while foregrounding concepts, values and political objectives (Danler, 2007). As Hennig (2020, p. 77) argues, the use of nominal style is not merely a syntactic pattern, but a deliberate choice within the full grammatical repertoire of a language. The preference for nominal constructions allows for the condensation of information, which might constitute a strategic advantage in political discourse. Danler (2007, p. 243) further emphasizes that nominal style asserts a claim to anonymous general validity. This grammatical strategy serves a legitimating purpose and is identified by Van Leeuwen (2007) as rationalization, where political actions are presented as logical responses to objective circumstances rather than ideological choices.

In German linguistic research, the effect of nominalization is well-documented (Wöllstein & Dudenredaktion, 2022; Hennig, 2020; Zifonun, 2021). The nominal style is frequently criticized for impairing readability, primarily because of its detachment from agentive and metaphorical dimensions (Zifonun, 2021). According to Zifonun (2021, p. 121), nominal constructions are particularly widespread in formal German texts because they allow for the condensation of extensive informa-

tion into compact syntactic units. At the same time, they promote a higher degree of abstraction by removing explicit reference to agents or temporal contexts.

The contrast between nominal and verbal constructions is illustrated in the following examples:

(1)

a. der Schutz der Außengrenzen gegen illegale Zuwanderung ('the protection of the external borders against illegal immigration')

b. Wir schützen die Außengrenzen vor illegaler Zuwanderung ('we protect the external borders from illegal immigration')

The nominal construction performs several interconnected ideological functions. First, the omission of explicit subjects removes political responsibility, presenting border militarization as an autonomous necessity rather than a contested policy choice. This agency obscuration works in tandem with the abstract noun *Schutz* 'protection', which frames exclusionary practices through security discourse, invoking what Fairclough (2003) terms "common sense" naturalization of ideological positions. Simultaneously, the modifier *illegale* criminalizes human mobility, enacting what Van Dijk (2006) called negative other-presentation of migrants while constructing the state as protective agent—a clear instance of positive self-presentation. These grammatical choices operate to transform what is fundamentally a political decision about border policy into an apparently objective administrative imperative. This strategic deployment of noun valency becomes especially salient when paired with support verbs (Iriarte Sanromán, 2001; Mel'čuk, 2015) that carry minimal semantic content and primarily serve to accommodate the noun phrase syntactically.

Consider the following corpus examples:

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(2) den wirksamen Schutz der Außengrenzen gegen illegale Zuwanderung ('the effective protection of the external borders against illegal immigration')

(3) implementação de um programa gratuito para o ensino de português ('implementation of a free program for the teaching of Portuguese')

These noun phrases thus instantiate specific conceptual frames (cf. Hart, 2023), guiding not only interpretation but also evaluative orientation. Following Hodge and Kress (1993), these nominal constructions encode modality relations that reflect and reproduce power structures. The compactness inherent in nominal style allows for what Danler (2007) characterizes as claims to "anonymous general validity"—presenting particular political interests as universal administrative necessities. This grammatical procedure serves far-right discourse by transforming exclusionary ideologies into seemingly neutral bureaucratic procedures.

The semantic packaging enabled by nominal constructions also facilitates what Van Leeuwen (2007) identifies as legitimation by means of authorization, where abstract institutional concepts like *Sicherheit* 'security' or *Ordnung* 'order' invoke state authority to justify restrictive measures (cf. Reyes 2011). Through their valency potential, these nouns become central to understanding how political discourse structures meaning in service of particular power relations and social hierarchies.

These theoretical insights converge on a central analytical expectation: that far-right discourse systematically employs event nouns (Hölzner, 2007) as primary vehicles for ideological encoding. Event nouns enable the semantic packaging of complex political actions into linguistically compact units that simultaneously condense meaning and obscure agency. Furthermore, their capacity for argument structure projection allows them to organize discourse around specific thematic frames while backgrounding the political interests they serve. Understanding how these nominal constructions structure meaning is therefore central to revealing the grammatical mechanisms through

which far-right discourse achieves legitimation effects below the threshold of conscious political debate.

2. Methodological approach

In what follows, we present the empirical and methodological framework of the study. This section begins by introducing the bilingual comparable corpus used as the empirical basis for the analysis and detailing the criteria for its selection, compilation and linguistic annotation (see §2.1). We then outline the analytical procedures adopted to investigate the behavior of noun-based argument structures, combining both syntactic pattern extraction and quantitative semantic modeling (see §2.2). By integrating traditional corpus-linguistic techniques with distributional semantic analysis, the aim is to uncover how predicate nouns function as carriers of ideological content within far-right political discourse. The methodological setup is guided by the specific goal of capturing the interaction between lexical meaning and discursive function.

2.1. Corpus description

This study adopts a corpus-driven approach (Bubenhofer, 2009) to investigate the syntactic-semantic behavior of noun-based argument structures in far-right political discourse. The analysis draws on a bilingual comparable corpus consisting of the most recent electoral programs (2025) published by two far-right parties: AfD in Germany and Chega in Portugal[5]. These texts were selected because they are primary, programmatic documents explicitly crafted to persuade voters and articulate a party's ideological and strategic agenda (cf. Girnth, 2015).

5. Both documents were retrieved directly from the official websites of the respective political parties.

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As Girnth (2015) observes, electoral programs play a crucial role in shaping political discourse, carrying communicative responsibility during election campaigns and serving as authoritative articulations of a party's goals and self-representation. From a linguistic standpoint, they are particularly well-suited to the present study due to their high density of nominal structures, which tend to reflect the thematic organization of political proposals.

Furthermore, Girnth (2015) argues that electoral programs can be classified as argumentative and persuasive texts with a programmatic function. They aim to present a party's goals, values and proposed measures in a coherent and formalized manner, combining informative exposition with strategic positioning. Unlike spontaneous or emotionally charged formats such as speeches or debates, these documents are typically structured, lexically dense, and oriented toward rational persuasion and credibility building.

To prepare the corpus of texts for linguistic analysis, the original documents (provided in PDF format) were converted into plain text files. A series of preprocessing steps was then carried out to remove formatting noise and ensure textual consistency across the two languages. These steps included (a) the reconstruction of hyphenated words broken across line breaks and (b) the normalization of whitespace and paragraph structure. All cleaning operations were implemented using custom R scripts[6] based on regular expressions, with the aim of preserving as much linguistic structure as possible while eliminating elements introduced during document conversion. The resulting texts constitute the input for the subsequent stages of annotation and analysis.

Following preprocessing, the texts were subjected to token-level linguistic annotation using the principles and tag-set of the Universal Dependencies framework (Straka, 2018). UD offers a cross-linguistically consistent scheme for encoding morphosyntactic information and dependency relations, which is essential for the analysis of noun valency patterns.

6. All scripts employed in the processes of corpus compilation and linguistic analysis will be provided by the author upon request.

The corpus is structured in a vertical format (Bubenhofer, 2020), with linguistic information distributed across columns. Each token is annotated with its lemma, part-of-speech category, morphological features (e.g., number, case, gender, tense), and syntactic dependency relations. For this study, pretrained models trained on the German-GSD and Portuguese-Bosque treebanks were used. Given the high accuracy reported for these models (Straka, 2018), no manual post-editing of the annotation was performed.

2.2. Analytical procedure: quantitative semantics

The analytical component of this study combines quantitative corpus-linguistic methods with semantic vector modeling to investigate how noun-based argument structures behave across the corpus. As a preliminary step, the total number of tokens in each corpus was computed to obtain a general sense of corpus size, lexical density, and the distribution of autosemantic parts of speech. Nouns constitute the highest proportion in both corpora (22.88% in German and 20.56% in Portuguese), followed by adjectives in German (approximately 10%) and verbs in Portuguese (around 8%). This distribution already highlights the central role of lexical meaning conveyed by nouns. These findings support the observation that nominal constructions are more prominent in the selected text typology than other lexical parts of speech.

The remainder of the semantic analysis adopts a frequency-based approach, starting with an examination of the 50 most frequent nouns in each corpus to uncover cross-linguistic parallels. In addition, we aim to provide information on the most represented semantic classes through manual observation, as no suitable semantic tagging tool is currently available[7]. The semantic classification of ontology-based categories is expected to contribute to a better understanding of the discursive

7. In the case of Portuguese, a module of the USAS UCREL (see https://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/usas/) semantic tagging system has been adapted to the language. However, no equivalent adaptation currently exists for German, which further justifies the need for manual annotation in this study.

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profile of each political party and will follow the principles of the Portlex lexical ontology (Domínguez Vázquez et al., 2021).

To analyze argument structures, we implemented a pattern-based extraction procedure targeting noun-modifier constructions. Specifically, for each noun lemma, we searched for nmod-type dependents occurring within a four-token window to the right of the noun. This window was selected to capture typical prepositional noun modifiers while avoiding the inclusion of overly broad contexts. This right-hand orientation was primarily motivated by the fact that valency-relevant nominal dependents realized as genitive or prepositional phrases—the constructions targeted in this study—are predominantly postnominal in both German and Portuguese. It shall be acknowledged, however, that both languages admit prenominal modification (e.g., certain adjectival or quantifying elements); this extraction procedure does not capture such prenominal dependents. The resulting constructions offer insights into how far-right discourse elaborates noun phrases through nominal and prepositional modification.

In order to explore semantic similarity, we prepared the corpus for training word2vec models. This involved extracting all sentence-level sequences composed of autosemantic words, while discarding function words and punctuation. The resulting lemmatized sentences were saved as plain text files, with each line corresponding to one sentence. This setup facilitates the training of distributional models based on co-occurrence patterns within a defined context window (Mikolov et al., 2013). Using the word2vec package in R, we trained separate skip-gram models for German and Portuguese with a context window of five tokens. These parameters were chosen to balance granularity and generalization, providing sufficient resolution to distinguish closely related terms while maintaining broader conceptual groupings. The resulting models encode semantic similarity based on distributional proximity in context, operationalizing the principle that words appearing in simil-

ar contexts tend to have related meanings (Firth, 1957). To illustrate the semantic landscape associated with selected keywords, we performed nearest-neighbor queries within each word embedding space. For a given target lemma, the model returns a ranked list of the most similar terms based on cosine similarity (cf. Mikolov et al., 2013). It should be stressed that distributional proximity, in itself, does not demonstrate a particular ideological reading: throughout section 3.2, embedding results are therefore interpreted in conjunction with, rather than as a substitute for, the concrete corpus examples (1)-(18) discussed above and below.

3. Results: noun semantics in far-right political discourse

3.1. On the frequency of nominal semantic classes

In order to identify cross-linguistic patterns of semantic representation within far-right political discourse in German and Portuguese, a contrastive analysis was carried out based on the 50 most frequent nouns in each language. These high-frequency lexical items serve as entry points for exploring the underlying semantic architecture of political messaging, with particular attention to areas of convergence. Table 1 presents common nouns that appear among the 50 most frequent words in both German and Portuguese corpora[8], showing their conceptual alignment across languages.

The recurrence of semantically equivalent items such as 'measure', 'protection' or 'state' suggests a shared discursive focus on control, institutional authority and security, which appear to be key themes in far-right political rhetoric. These nouns are not only thematically significant but also grammatically salient as valency carriers, capable of projecting semantic roles and structuring argument positions in nominal constructions.

8. In the case of polysemous words, only synonymous or conceptually parallel senses are taken into consideration. That is, only the meanings that are shared across both analyzed languages are included in the analysis.

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Notably, the data includes nouns denoting events or abstract actions (e.g., 'development', 'measure'), institutions and collective actors (e.g., 'family', 'citizen'). These categories emerge as central semantic classes structuring far-right discourse in both languages. These semantic fields suggest common thematic preoccupations across both language corpora regarding social structures and transformative processes.

TABLE 1 - Common nouns with high frequency overlap in German and Portuguese

German	Portuguese	Gloss
Maßnahme	medida	'measure'
Familie	família	'family'
Staat	estado	'state'
Recht	direito	'right'
Bürger	cidadão	'citizen'
Politik	política	'policy'
Unternehmen	empresa	'company'
Bereich	área	'area'
Schutz	proteção	'protection'
Sicherheit	segurança	'security'
Form	forma	'form'
Jahr	ano	'year'
Leben	vida	'life'
Entwicklung	desenvolvimento	'development'
System	sistema	'system'
Arbeit	trabalho	'work'
Land	país	'country'
Voraussetzung	condição	'condition'

These conceptualization equivalences reinforce the methodological value of frequency-based selection as a proxy for identifying core concepts and discursive priorities within far-right political discourse. The recurrence of semantically aligned lexical items across the two languages suggests that high-frequency nouns are not merely statistically prominent, but also ideologically central. By mapping shared conceptual ground this approach enables the systematic identification of discourse-relevant categories.

Relying on the Portlex lexical ontology (Domínguez Vázquez et al., 2021), the majority of top frequent nouns in the corpus are assigned to top-level semantic categories such as {intellectual}, {dynamic situation} and {static situation}. These categories typically encompass abstract concepts related to institutional processes and general conditions or transformations, which aligns with the discursive focus of political texts on regulation, policy and systemic change. Although some nouns fall into other domains—such as {animate} entities or {location}—these categories are comparatively less represented in terms of frequency. These dominant ontological categories primarily consist of event nouns and role-denoting nominals (Hölzner, 2007).

3.2. On the distributional semantics of nominal structures in far-right discourse

In general, given that the Portuguese corpus is larger than the German one, a higher number of nominal argument structures is observed in Portuguese. However, many of these constructions exhibit clear parallels with those found in the German data, as anticipated, since they tend to refer to similar domains of public life. This overlap suggests that, despite quantitative differences, both corpora reflect a shared conceptual framework typical of far-right discourse, centered around issues such as security, (absence of) rights and national identity. It should be stressed that this parallelism

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operates chiefly at the level of syntactic-functional patterning (comparable dependency configurations around comparable predicate nouns) and thematic content (comparable topics occupying the argument slots), rather than constituting evidence of distributional equivalence in the strict sense; the word-embedding results discussed below capture proximity relations internal to each language-specific vector space and are not directly comparable across languages.

When the analysis is focused on nouns belonging to categories such as {intellectual}, {dynamic situation} or {static situation}, it becomes evident that frequent lexical items like 'measure' and 'protection' serve as nodes which articulate salient discursive themes. These nouns function as abstract anchors that allow for the condensation of complex ideological content, particularly in relation to state intervention, social order and perceived threats:

(4) Maßnahmen für den Wiederaufbau der Bundeswehr ('measures for the reconstruction of the German armed forces')

(5) Maßnahmen der Strafverfolgung ('measures of criminal prosecution')

(6) medidas de combate à corrupção ('measures to combat corruption')

(7) medidas seculares no sentido de preservação ('secular measures aimed at preservation')

(8) Schutz der Außengrenzen gegen illegale Zuwanderung ('protection of the external borders against illegal immigration')

(9) proteção da indústria nacional contra práticas de concorrência desleal ('protection of national industry against unfair competition practices')

It is noteworthy that political discourse frequently centers on anchor nouns embedded within argument structures. These nouns typically occupy predicate positions that license or trigger the presence of specific complements, which in turn tend to denote more concrete or situated entities—often belonging to the {dynamic situation} class of the Portlex lexical ontology

(Domínguez Vázquez et al., 2021)—as illustrated in the examples discussed above. In examples (4)-(9), the condensation of meaning revolves around nouns denoting 'measure' or 'protection'. However, the discursive structure often unfolds in the dependent slot, focusing on argumental questions such as 'measures for what?' or 'protection of what and against what?'. This pattern suggests that the far-right tends to thematize issues such as external borders, national industry, corruption, criminal prosecution, and, notably, opposition to immigration. These themes are densely encoded within noun phrases, allowing for a higher degree of informational compression. Despite the lexical differences between the languages examined, the structures in which these topics appear are highly parallel and therefore comparable in functional-syntactic terms.

A similar case is represented by the noun denoting 'form', which can be semantically classified as an instance of a {static situation, attribute} (Domínguez Vázquez et al., 2021). It functions as a shell noun (Schmid, 2000), whose inherent meaning is activated and specified through contextual dependence. In such cases, the meaning is directly inherited from the argument slot, shaped by the syntactic and semantic content that fills it, in this case also denoting a {static situation}:

(10) jede Form von Impfpflicht ('any form of compulsory vaccination')

(11) forma de serviço ao país ('form of service to the country')

These structures illustrate the extent to which the meaning of a shell noun is conditioned by its arguments, as these provide a more precise semantic specification. This is particularly evident in the case of nouns denoting relations between entities, even when such nouns possess an inherent meaning and are not typically classified as shell nouns. Examples like 'condition' or 'right' demonstrate this phenomenon. Although these nouns are semantically more specific and generally exhibit a clear lexical delimitation, the interpretation they receive is highly context-dependent. In the case of

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far-right discourse, their meaning is shaped not only by their syntactic complements, but also by the broader thematic framing (cf. Hart, 2023).

(12) gesetzliche Voraussetzungen für eine unverzügliche Abschiebung von ausländischen Straftätern ('legal requirements for the immediate deportation of foreign offenders')

(13) condições fundamentais para a sustentabilidade futura da Segurança Social ('fundamental conditions for the future sustainability of Social Security')

(14) o direito das mulheres grávidas à escolha do local de nascimento ('the right of pregnant women to choose their place of birth')

(15) Recht der Bürger auf ein analoges Leben außerhalb der digitalisierten Verwaltungs- und Alltagsabläufe ('Citizens' right to an analogue life outside digitized administrative and everyday processes')

For instance, in example (12) the noun *Voraussetzungen* is tied to a framework of exclusion and security. It does not merely refer to generic legal preconditions but encodes a political stance regarding immigration and penal policy. In contrast, example (13) uses *condições* in a socio-economic context and the predicate noun aligns with policy measures aimed at promoting natality. Examples (14) and (15), involving *direito* and *Recht*, further illustrate this contextual dependency. In (14) the noun denotes reproductive rights and in (15) it is framed within a nostalgic or resistant stance against digitalization. These examples demonstrate that even nouns with defined inherent meanings can function as discourse-sensitive operators, where their actual interpretation emerges from the interaction between their argument structure and contextual embedding. In examples (14) and (15) biargumental nominal structures are activated, as they encode the right of an {animate, human} entity to a specific {dynamic situation}.

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The preceding discussion on the context-dependent interpretation of abstract or anchor nouns is further supported by the application of word embedding techniques to the corpus. By analyzing the distributional semantics of these nouns, it becomes evident that their co-occurring lexical environments reflect the thematic and ideological orientations of the discourse in which they appear. As emphasized in §2.2, the distributional patterns reported below are interpreted jointly with the concrete corpus examples already discussed—particularly examples (12)-(15) for *Recht/direito* and *Voraussetzung/condição*—rather than treated as free-standing evidence of an ideological interpretation. For instance, when mapping the semantic neighborhood of *Recht* in the German corpus, the closest vectors include *Leben* 'life' (similarity 0.942), *Wohlstand* 'prosperity' (0.922) and *Abwehrrechte* 'defensive rights' (0.911). These associations reinforce the observation that *Recht* in this context often invokes narratives of protection, preservation, and individual autonomy—central motifs in far-right discourse (cf. Meier-Vieracker, 2024). In the Portuguese corpus, *direito* reveals proximity to terms like *filiação* 'filiation' (0.877) and *maternidade* 'motherhood' (0.798), indicating a discourse that emphasizes family structures and reproductive rights. This aligns with the previously discussed notion that the argument slot activates a discourse on pro-natalist policy measures and the socio-political framing of motherhood.

In contrast, nouns like *Voraussetzung* and *condição*, or *Form* and *forma*, display a more generalized or underspecified distribution, consistent with their dynamic context-dependent behavior as shell nouns. For example, *Voraussetzung* shows high similarity with *Straftäter* 'criminal offender' (0.948), *Staatsangehörigkeit* 'nationality' (0.930), and *Gewalttäter* 'violent offender' (0.911), suggesting that it is frequently used in juridical or securitarian contexts, reinforcing exclusionary or regulatory frames. Similarly, *Form* clusters with *Klimaideologie* 'climate ideology' (0.982) and *Schwangerschaft* 'pregnancy' (0.982). The Portuguese equivalents *condição* and *forma* exhibit comparable patterns, with *condição* aligning with *conforto* 'comfort' (0.792), *autossustento* 'self-sufficiency' (0.737),

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and *perigosidade* 'dangerousness' (0.734); and *forma* occurring near *clientelismo* 'clientelism' (0.704) and *inserção* 'insertion' (0.700).

Additional patterns emerge with nouns like *Maßnahme* / *medida* 'measure' and *Schutz* / *proteção* 'protection', which also function as key structuring elements in political discourse. In German, *Maßnahme* co-occurs with *Strafverfolgung* 'criminal prosecution' (0.891), while in Portuguese, *medida* clusters with *denunciante* 'whistle-blower' (0.774) and *subsidiário* 'subsidiary' (0.759). These associations reflect an action-oriented discourse, often regulatory or repressive in tone. Similarly, *Schutz* is closely related to *Sprache* 'language' (0.960) and *Kulturförderung* 'cultural promotion' (0.953), and *proteção* to *pátria* 'homeland' (0.804) and *grávida* 'pregnant woman' (0.787), confirming the dual role of these nouns in articulating protectionist ideologies—whether cultural, national, or biological.

A similar behavior can be both expected and confirmed in the case of nouns such as *System* / *sistema* 'system' and *Entwicklung* / *desenvolvimento* 'development', whose meaning is strongly configured by the content of their argument slots. These nouns function as abstract shells which clearly depend on what kind of system or development is being referred to. Particular attention should be paid to nouns like *Politik* / *política* 'policy' and *Sicherheit* / *segurança* 'security', as their semantic weight is already considerable even in isolation. Their inherent ideological and evaluative potential means that the argument structure often serves to narrow or frame meanings that are otherwise broad, and to align them with specific discursive goals:

(16) unverantwortliche Politik der offenen Grenzen ('irresponsible policy of open borders')

(17) mangelnde Sicherheit im öffentlichen Raum ('absence of security in public space')

(18) política de imigração descontrolada ('uncontrolled immigration policy')

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This observation is further corroborated by the distributional patterns revealed through word embedding analysis, which shed light on the semantic affinities of these ideologically salient nouns. In the case of *Politik*, the German model shows high similarity scores with lexical units such as *planwirtschaftlich* 'centrally planned' (0.966), *Steuer* 'tax' (0.950), and *Asylpolitik* 'asylum policy' (0.949). These associations suggest that *Politik* is framed within a discourse that emphasizes economic control, taxation, and migration policy. In the Portuguese corpus, *política* appears in proximity to terms like *conservadorismo* 'conservatism' (0.722), further indicating a value-laden usage.

The noun *Sicherheit* 'security' exhibits similarly telling co-occurrence patterns, with close semantic neighbors such as *Zensur* 'censorship' (0.943) and *Meinungsfreiheit* 'freedom of expression' (0.931). This suggests a discursive logic in which 'security' is closely linked to control of public discourse. In contrast, the Portuguese equivalent *segurança* does not exhibit such a clearly defined cluster of semantically aligned terms, indicating a potentially broader or more diffuse use of the concept in the Chega program.

The focus will be now on a subset of relational nouns that denote either {animate, human} or {animate, institutional} entities, including *Bürger* / *cidadão* 'citizen', *Familie* / *família* 'family', *Unternehmen* / *empresa* 'company', and *Staat* / *estado* 'state'. These nouns often carry an agentive dimension, which may or may not be made explicit through the nominal argument structures in which they occur (cf. Hölzner 2007). Their behavior might offer insights into how far-right discourse positions social actors and institutional agents within ideologically charged frames.

The analysis begins with the nouns in the {animate, human} class. In the German corpus, *Bürger* 'citizen' does not appear to activate extensive argument structures; it typically occurs in origin-based constructions, such as *Bürger unseres Landes* 'citizens of our country', which emphasize belonging and national identity rather than agency or action. In contrast, the Portuguese equivalent *cidadãos*

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is used in expressions like *cidadãos em idade ativa* 'citizens of working age', where the modifier focuses on demographic productivity, suggesting a more utilitarian framing of citizenship.

The noun *Familie* 'family' also does not exhibit complex argument structures in the German corpus. Its presence, however, is closely tied to themes such as natality and social reproduction, consistent with far-right discourse strategies that idealize the traditional family unit. Similarly, the Portuguese *família* rarely appears with syntactically elaborated complements but functions as a condensation point for ideologically loaded content, particularly in frames related to state subsidies, social protection, and pro-natalist policies.

The same tendency can be observed with the {animate, institutional} nouns *Unternehmen* 'company' and *Staat* 'state'. In both cases, the relational argument structure remains minimal, offering little semantic expansion beyond the core referent. *Unternehmen* often appears in general references without specifying agency or purpose. *Staat* may co-occur with modifiers, but it rarely activates complement slots that would define its function or scope more precisely. In the Portuguese corpus, *empresas* appear in expressions such as *empresas do setor da Defesa* 'companies in the defense sector', and *estado* behaves similarly to *Staat*, lacking syntactic constructions that reveal deeper semantic roles.

These observations are further substantiated by the distributional profiles derived from word embedding models. In the German corpus, *Bürger* 'citizen' is closely associated with terms like *Eigenverantwortung* 'personal responsibility' (0.937) and *Handlungsspielraum* 'room for action' (0.930). These associations suggest a framing of the citizen not in terms of rights or entitlements, but rather as a self-reliant, autonomous agent, in line with neoliberal and far-right discursive tropes emphasizing individual accountability over collective welfare. For *Familie*, the nearest neighbors in-

clude *Kind* 'child' (0.931) and *schützen* 'protect' (0.880), reinforcing its association with natality and protectionist frames.

The noun *Unternehmen* 'company' shows high similarity with *Industrie* 'industry' (0.977) and *Rentensystem* 'pension system' (0.976), indicating that it is frequently framed within macroeconomic and institutional contexts. *Staat* 'state' shows proximity to *demokratisch* 'democratic' (0.952), *Souveränität* 'sovereignty' (0.940), and *Nation* 'nation' (0.930), suggesting a symbolic and ideological use of the state as a guarantor of identity and authority.

In the Portuguese corpus, the results are comparable though somewhat less cohesive. *Família* is associated with *monoparental* 'single-parent' (0.780) and, more surprisingly, with *asfixiar* 'to suffocate' (0.722), a metaphorical link possibly reflecting discourses of family under threat or pressure (e.g., *famílias asfixiadas em impostos* 'families suffocated by taxes'). This supports the view of *família* as a symbolic object of protection and regulation. *Empresa* co-occurs with *desincentivar* 'to discourage' (0.805) and *avença* 'retainer contract' (0.803), suggesting a more technical-economic framing, often linked to tax or regulatory discourse. *Estado* aligns with *facilitador* 'facilitator' (0.790) and *soberano* 'sovereign' (0.775), confirming its institutional and symbolic status, similar to *Staat*. Lastly, *cidadão* presents less distinct clustering, with *exemplar* 'exemplary' (0.765) as its closest neighbor, pointing perhaps to normative or evaluative framings, though lacking strong semantic anchoring.

In sum, the distributional and structural behavior of noun-based constructions in far-right discourse reveals a consistent pattern of semantic condensation, where ideologically salient content is encoded through abstract, relational, and often underspecified nouns. Whether functioning as shell nouns ('form', 'condition') or as ideologically charged anchors ('right', 'security', 'policy'), these lexical items derive much of their meaning from argumental slots and co-occurrence contexts, rather

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than from lexical content alone. Despite cross-linguistic variation, both corpora exhibit parallel strategies of nominalization, favoring compact syntactic structures that allow for high informational density and ideological framing. Word embedding analysis is consistent with these tendencies, showing that far-right discourse systematically mobilizes nominal structures to foreground values such as security, sovereignty, productivity, and traditional family roles. This reflects a discourse style that is lexically dense, abstract, and ideologically encoded, as will be further discussed in section 4. Three levels of comparison should accordingly be kept distinct: syntactic-functional parallelism (the recurrence of comparable dependency configurations), thematic parallelism (the recurrence of comparable topics within argument slots), and distributional similarity (the language-internal proximity relations captured by the word-embedding models). While the first two are systematically attested across both corpora, the third, by construction, cannot be measured across languages and should be read, within each language, as suggestive of the discourse framings discussed above rather than as independent confirmation of them.

4. Discussion of the results

In this section, the aim is to explore how the linguistic patterns analyzed in section 3 contribute to the construction of far-right narratives in the German and Portuguese contexts. Special attention is paid to how abstract nouns and nominal argument structures not only condense ideological content at the phrasal level, but also serve as discursive anchors that project broader meanings throughout the text. These nominal constructions enable a semantic crystallization of values and attitudes that become central to the far-right worldview.

These findings resonate directly with the theoretical framework outlined in section 1. Danler's (2007) notion of nominal style as a claim to 'anonymous general validity', Van Leeuwen's (2007)

category of legitimation by authorization, Hodge and Kress's (1993) account of modality as an index of power relations, and Hart's (2023) cognitive-linguistic model of framing converge in explaining why event nouns and relational nouns such as *Schutz/proteção* or *Sicherheit/segurança* function as privileged vehicles for ideological encoding in the corpus under analysis.

A first and prominent strategy observed in both corpora is the discursive construction of the nation and the state through lexically dense phrases. This is often achieved via nouns such as *Schutz / proteção* 'protection' and *Staat / estado* 'state', which appear in syntactic configurations that frame the state as a sovereign and threatened entity. The recurrent presence of argument structures such as *Schutz der Außengrenzen* 'protection of external borders' or *estado soberano* 'sovereign state' exemplifies how far-right discourse emphasizes external threats and positions the state as a defensive agent responsible for preserving language, culture, and national identity (cf. Lehner, 2019; Wodak, 2015). This narrative is further reinforced by the co-occurrence of these nouns with terms related to national heritage, internal cohesion, and collective belonging. This backgrounding of agency is not exclusive to far-right electoral programs: Fairclough (2003) and Fowler (1991) had already identified comparable strategies of agent-omission in their analyses of the conservative press, suggesting that nominalization-based concealment of responsibility constitutes a broader resource of conservative and hegemonic discourse, of which the present far-right corpus offers a particularly systematic instantiation.

At the same time, these constructions often intersect with racialized and exclusionary logics. As Meier-Vieracker (2024) argues, far-right discourse tends to embed racism within seemingly neutral or bureaucratic frames, such as those referring to citizenship, legality, or border control. This becomes evident in the repeated invocation of origin-based expressions (*Bürger unseres Landes* 'citizens of our country') and in the semantic proximity of nouns like *Voraussetzung* or *condição* to

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criminality or national belonging. Such patterns reflect a strategy in which linguistic forms naturalize hierarchies, presenting exclusion not as ideological, but as a matter of legal or administrative necessity.

Another central strategy in far-right discourse is the construction of a victim narrative (cf. Lehner, 2019; Wodak, 2015), in which the in-group—typically the national community—is portrayed as being under threat not only from external forces, such as immigration or supranational governance, but also from internal mechanisms of repression, notably the alleged restriction of free speech. This victimization narrative operationalizes what Wodak (2015) describes as the discursive construction of 'us and them', whereby the in-group is rhetorically consolidated against a perceived external or internal out-group; in the present corpus, this polarization is realized nominally, through the same argument structures (e.g., *Schutz/proteção*, *Sicherheit/segurança*) that construct the state and the nation as embattled entities requiring defense. In this context, the noun 'security' plays a double role. While it frequently appears in connection with 'protection' and state functions, it is also closely associated—particularly in the German corpus—with terms such as 'censorship' and 'freedom of expression'. This co-occurrence pattern reflects a discursive inversion: far-right actors appropriate the liberal value of free speech to position themselves as the silenced minority. In doing so, they construct a semantic frame in which 'security' also refers to the protection of the right to express "unpopular truths" allegedly suppressed by the mainstream media, political elites, or legal frameworks. This enables far-right discourse to legitimize transgressive or xenophobic speech acts under the banner of defending democratic principles.

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Concluding remarks

This paper has demonstrated to what extent noun valency, though rooted in logical-semantic properties and reflected in syntactic configurations, also gives rise to discursive and pragmatic effects (cf. Domínguez Vázquez, 2011; Danler, 2007). Certain noun-based argument structures are clearly preferred in political discourse, as they facilitate the condensation of ideological content and enable strategic choices such as the backgrounding of agency, the naturalization of values, or the framing of social realities. The distributional semantic analysis further supports these findings by revealing how lexically distinct but functionally equivalent structures operate across languages to encode similar conceptual frameworks. This underscores the cross-linguistic regularity of ideological coding in far-right political texts.

At the same time, the study has highlighted some methodological limitations, particularly the current lack of automated cross-linguistic semantic taggers. As shown in sections 2.2 and 3.1, the annotation of semantic classes had to be performed manually, which, although precise, is less scalable and offers a lower level of granularity than what would be achievable through automated semantic tagging. Nonetheless, ongoing initiatives such as the ESMAS-ES^{+} project offer promising avenues for the development of ontology-based tools capable of supporting multilingual semantic annotation.

In conclusion, far-right political discourse, contained in the self-compiled corpus under analysis, consistently gravitates toward a limited set of recurring themes—security, sovereignty, identity, reproduction—already well documented in the literature. This study contributes to developing a focus on programmatic texts, and more specifically, on the semantic compression and structuring capacity of nominal constructions. These findings suggest that the interplay between valency, lexic-

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al semantics, and discourse strategies is key to understanding how ideology is encoded in language, not only through what is said, but through how it is syntactically and semantically constructed.

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